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KIT CARSON IN CALIFORNIA

No small amount of Kit Carson's fame is due to his exploits in California. The romantic and stirring interest which surrounds his name was first aroused when his overland and Californian adventures were chronicled in the writings of Fremont and Emory, for whom he acted as guide and scout across the uncharted West.

From his home in Taos, New Mexico, Carson made no less than six journeys to the Pacific, and engaged in events which brought California under the wing of our republic, participating in the Bear Flag revolt and in Fremont's military activities during 1845-46. He guided Kearny's army of the West down the Gila and across the Colorado Desert and played a notable part in the battle of San Pasqual. As official messenger he carried to the States the first news of the acquisition of California, and two years later, news of the gold discovery. He helped establish the direct route across the Great Basin followed by the emigrants of 1846 and the gold rush days. All this gives Christopher Carson a lasting place in the pioneer history of California.

On his first far western journey, in 1829-30, as a junior member of Ewing Young's band of beaver trappers, Carson traversed that part of Arizona and California now crossed by the Santa Fé Railroad, and was one of the first Americans to cover this entire route. But little is known of Young's first expedition. Practically all we have is the short notice by the veteran fur-hunter, J. J. Warner, who wrote of this from hearsay (*Reminiscences of Early California, 1831 to 1846*. Hist. Soc. of Southern Calif. Vol. VII, 1909, pp. 176-193), and the account which Carson himself has left us.

Carson dictated the story of his life as far as the year 1858 to his friend Col. DeWitt Clinton Peters. The original manuscript, in the handwriting of Col. Peters' wife and signed by Carson, was discovered in 1905 by Col. Peters' son among the effects of his brother in Paris. This manuscript, the one which Col. Peters used in writing his well known "Life of Kit Carson," is now in the Ayer Collection at the Newberry Library in Chicago, and we quote from it at length, partly because the fact that Carson accompanied Young has been

questioned in Bancroft's History, and partly because Carson gives a more exact record of Young's route than have Warner and Peters.

Carson says—"I left Santa Fé for Taos shortly after my arrival from El Paso, and got employment of Mr. Ewing Young to do his cooking, my board being the remuneration. In the spring [1828] I once more departed for the States, met a party on the Arkansas, and again returned to Santa Fé. I then was employed by Col. Trammell, a merchant, as interpreter. I accompanied him to Chihuahua and then hired with Robert McKnight to go to the copper mines near the Rio Gila. I remained at the mines a few months driving team. I was not satisfied with this employment, took my discharge and departed for Taos, arrived in August 1828.

Some time before my arrival, Mr. Ewing Young had sent a party of trappers to the Colorado of the West. They, in a fight with the Indians, were defeated, having fought all one day, and gaining no advantage, they considered it prudent to return. Young then raised a party of forty men, consisting of Americans, Canadians and Frenchmen, and took command himself. I joined the party which left Taos in August 1829.

In those days licenses were not granted to citizens of the United States to trap within the limits of the Mexican territory. To avoid all mistrust on the part of the Government officers, we travelled in a northern direction for fifty miles, and then changed our course to southwest, travelled through the country occupied by the Navajo Indians, passed the village of Zuni, and on to the head of the Salt River, one of the tributaries of the Rio Gila.

We, on the head waters of the Salt River, met the same Indians that had defeated the former party. Young directed the greater part of his men to hide themselves, which was done, the men concealing themselves under blankets, pack saddles, and as best they could. The hills were covered with Indians, and, seeing so few, they came to the conclusion to make an attack and drive us from our position. Our commander allowed them to enter the camp and then directed the party to fire on them, which was done, the Indians losing in killed some fifteen or twenty warriors, and a great number of wounded. The Indians were routed, and we continued our march and trapped down the Salt River to the mouth of San

Francisco river, and up to the head of the latter stream. We were nightly harassed by Indians. They would frequently of nights crawl into our camp, steal a trap or so, kill a mule or horse, and endeavor to do what damage they could.

The party was divided on the head of San Francisco River; one section to proceed to the valley of Sacramento in California, of which I was a member, and the other party to return to Taos for the purpose of procuring traps to replace those stolen, and to dispose of the beaver we had caught. Young took charge of the party for California consisting of eighteen men.

We remained a few days after the departure of the party for Taos, for the purpose of procuring meat, and making the necessary arrangements for a trip over a country never explored. Game was very scarce. After remaining three days continually on the hunt to procure the necessaries we had only killed three deer, the skins of which we took off in such a manner as to make tanks for the purpose of carrying water. We then started on our expedition in the best of spirits, having heard from the Indians that the streams of the valley to which we were going were full of beaver, but the country over which we were to travel was very barren, and that we would suffer very much for want of water; the truth of which we very soon knew.

The first four days march was over a country, sandy, burned up and not a drop of water. We received at night a small quantity of water from the tanks which we had been fortunate to have along. A guard was placed over the tanks to prohibit anyone from making use of more than his allowance. After four days travel we found water. Before we reached the water the pack mules were strung along the road for several miles. They having smelt the water long before we had any hopes of finding any, and then each animal made the best use of the strength left them after their severe sufferings to reach the water as soon as they could. We remained two days. It would have been impracticable to have continued the march without giving the men and animals rest they so much required.

After remaining encamped two days we started on our expedition, and for four days travelled over a country similar

to that which we travelled over before our arrival to the last water. There was not any water to be found during this time, and we suffered extremely on account of it. On the fourth day we arrived on the Colorado of the West, below the great Cañon. It can better be imagined, our joy, than described when we discovered the stream.

We had suffered greatly for want of food. We met a party of the Mohave Indians and purchased of them a mare, heavy with foal. The mare was killed and eaten by the party with great gusto; even to the foal was devoured. We encamped on the banks of the Colorado three days, recruiting our animals and trading for provisions with the Indians. We procured of them a few beans and corn. Then we took a southwestern course and, in three days march, struck the bed of a stream which rises in the coast range, has a northeast course, and is lost in the sands of the Great Basin. We proceeded up the stream for six days. In two days after our arrival on the stream we found water. We then left the stream and travelled in a westerly direction and, in four days, arrived at the Mission of San Gabriel.

At the Mission there was one priest, fifteen soldiers, and about one thousand Indians. They had about eighty thousand head of stock, fine fields and vineyards, in fact it was paradise on earth. We remained one day at the Mission, received good treatment of the inhabitants, and purchased of them what beef we required. We had nothing but butcher knives to trade, and for four they would give a beef.

In one day's travel from this Mission, we reached the Mission of San Fernando having about the same number of inhabitants, but not carried on [on] as large a scale as the one of San Gabriel. We then took [a] northwest course and passed the mountains to the valley of the Sacramento. We had plenty to eat and found grass in abundance for our animals. We found signs of trappers on the San Joaquin. We followed their trail and, in a few days, overtook the party and found them to be of the Hudson Bay Company. They were sixty men strong, commanded by Peter Ogden. We trapped down the San Joaquin and its tributaries and found but little beaver, but game plenty; elk, deer, and antelope in thousands. We travelled near each other until we came to the Sacramento; then we separated, Ogden taking up the Sacramento and for

Columbia river. We remained during the summer. Not being the season for trapping, we passed our time in hunting.

During our stay on the Sacramento a party of Indians of the Mission of San Rafael ran away and took refuge at a village of Indians who were not friendly with those of the Mission. The priest of San Rafael sent a party of fifteen Indians in pursuit. They applied for assistance from a village that was friendly, and were furnished with the number they required. They then moved towards the village where the runaways were concealed, demanded them to be given up, which was refused. They attacked the village and after a severe struggle they were compelled to retreat. They came to us and requested assistance. Mr. Young directed me and eleven men to join. We returned to the village and made an attack, fought for one entire day. The Indians were routed, lost a great number of men. We entered the village in triumph, set fire to it and burned it to the ground.

The next day we demanded the runaways and informed them that if not immediately given up we would not leave one of them alive. They complied with our demands. We turned over our Indians to those from whom they had deserted and we returned to our camp.

Mr. Young and four of us proceeded with the Indians to San Rafael. We took with us the beaver we had on hand. We were well received by the missionaries. At the Mission we found a trading schooner, the Captain of which was ashore. We traded with him our furs and, for the money, purchased horses of those at the Mission. Shortly afterwards a party of Indians during the night came to our camp, frightened our animals and ran off some sixty head. Fourteen were discovered in the morning. Twelve of us saddled up and took the trail of the lost animals, pursued them upwards of one hundred miles into the Sierra Nevada. We surprised the Indians when feasting off some of our animals they had killed. We charged their camp, killed eight Indians, took three children prisoners and recovered all our animals, with the exception of six that were eaten, and returned to our camp.

On the first September we struck camp, and returning by the same route which we had come, passing through San Fernando, we travelled to the Pueblo of Los Angeles, where the Mexican authorities demanded our passports. We had none.

They wished to arrest us, but fear deterred them. They then commenced selling liquor to the men, no doubt for the purpose of getting the men drunk so that they would have but little difficulty in making the arrest. Mr. Young discovered their intentions, directed me to take three men, all the loose animals, packs, etc., and go in advance. He would remain with the balance of the party and endeavor to get them along. If he did not arrive at my camp by next morning, I was directed to move on as best I could and on my return to report the party killed; for Young would not leave them. They were followed by the Mexicans, furnishing them all the liquor they could pay for. All got drunk except Young.

The Mexicans would have continued with them till they arrived at the Mission of San Gabriel, then, being re-inforced, arrest the party, only for a man by the name of James Higgins dismounting from his horse and deliberately shooting James Lawrence. Such conduct frightened the Mexicans, and they departed in all haste, fearing that, if men without provocation would shoot one another, it would require but little to cause them to murder them.

About dark Young and party found me. The next day we departed and pursued nearly the same route by which we came, and in nine days we arrived on the Colorado. Two days after our arrival on the Colorado at least five hundred Indian warriors came to our camp. They pretended friendship, but a such large number coming, we mistrusted them, and closely watched their manœuvres. We discovered where they had their weapons concealed, and then it became apparent to us that their design was to murder the party. There were but few of us in camp, the greater number being out visiting their traps. I considered the safest way to act was not to let the Indians know of our mistrust and to act in a fearless manner. One of the Indians could speak Spanish. I directed him to state to the Indians that they must leave our camp inside of ten minutes. If one should be found after the expiration of that time, he would be shot. Before the expiration of the ten minutes everyone had left.

We trapped down the south side of [the] Colorado river to tide water without any further molestation, and up the north side to the mouth of [the] San Pedro. Near the mouth of the San Pedro we saw a large herd of animals, horses, etc.

We knew that Indians were near and, not having forgot the damage these same Indians done, we concluded to deprive them of their stock. We charged their camp. They fled, and we took possession of the animals.

The same evening we heard a noise, something like the sound of distant thunder. We sprung for our arms and sallied out to reconnoiter. We discovered a party of Indians driving some two hundred horses. We charged them, firing a few shots. The Indians run, leaving us the sole possessors of the horses. Those horses had been stolen by the Indians from Mexicans in Sonora.

Having now more animals than we could take care of, we concluded to dispose of them to best advantage. We chose out as many as we required for riding and packing purposes, killed ten, dried the meat to take with us, and left the balance loose. I presume the Indians got them.

We continued up the Gila to opposite the copper mines. We went to the mines, found Robert McKnight there, left our beaver with him. We could not bring it to the settlements to dispose of on account of not having license to trap in Mexican territory. We concealed our beaver in one of the deep holes dug by the miners. Young and I remained a few days at the mines, the balance of the party had started for Taos. Young and I went to Santa Fé. He procured a license to trade with Indians on the Gila. He sent a few men to the mines to get the beaver he had concealed. They got it and returned to Santa Fé. Everyone considered he had made a fine trade in so short a period. They were not aware that we had been months trapping. The beaver was disposed of to advantage at Santa Fé, some two thousand pounds in all. In April 1830 [1831] we had all safely arrived at Taos."

The route from the headwaters of the San Francisco or Verde River in Arizona to the Mohave River in California is not certain. The party probably did not see the Grand Canyon as Peters and Sabin claim. They "discovered the stream"—the Colorado—"below the great Cañon." The oasis which the mules scented the fourth day on the desert was probably along the rivulet called by Sitgreaves, Yampai Creek, near the present stations Truxton and Hackberry. If the trappers had gone farther south they would have encountered many streams and the rough country about the headwaters of Bill Williams Fork

and would have followed this water to the Colorado without striking out into the desert again. If they had gone farther north they would have found no water that the mules could have smelt at any distance. The Colorado was reached four days' march from the Mohave, near the present site of Camp Mohave or the Needles, probably the former, since the dry parts of the Mohave river were reached after traveling southwest.

Carson's statement that the party returned to Taos in April 1830 is an error. The trappers left New Mexico in the fall of 1829 and "remained during the summer" of 1830 in the Sacramento Valley. Bancroft's California manuscript records show that Young was at San José on July 11, 1830, and was near Los Angeles on the way home, October 7. Bancroft also says that the runaway Indians were from the Mission of San José in Alameda county, California, rather than from San Rafael.

But little is known of Peter Skene Ogden's trip into the San Joaquin Valley in 1829. Warner tells us that after the rescue of Jedediah Smith, Ogden was sent out from Fort Vancouver by Governor McLoughlin of the Hudson's Bay Company to proceed up the Columbia and Lewis rivers and to go south until he should find the trail made by Smith on his first trip into the Tulare and San Joaquin Valleys. This was done to tap the beaver country reported by Smith, and to anticipate any future efforts Smith should make in this region with American trappers.

Ogden's journals (reported by Miss Agnes C. Laut in "The Conquest of the Great Northwest") record this expedition as having advanced by way of Salt Lake and the Humboldt River almost to Mt. Shasta, when it was turned back to Fort Vancouver, May 1829, by hostile Indians from the Pit River.

Ogden told these Indians that in three months they would see him again and here his journals end. The San Joaquin trip, mentioned by Carson, is not elsewhere recorded except by Warner, who confused the Great Basin expedition of 1828-29 with this one in the late fall of 1829. Warner says Ogden remained in the valley about eight months, gathered a valuable pack of furs and left for Oregon upon the trail made by McLeod, who had entered the Shasta region the previous year.

Of the eighteen men whom Carson says accompanied Young to California we know the names of only six. A correspondent of *Adventure Magazine* (May 3, 1921) claims that a relative of his, Captain Levi Scott, went with Carson to California "back before the Mexican War."

Young's expedition of 1829 opened the eyes of the Americans in New Mexico to the possibilities of trade with the Californians and furnished the incentive for Young's second trip in 1831-32 and the opening of the Wolfskill or Spanish Trail from Los Angeles to Santa Fé.

After the return to Taos, Carson occupied himself for over thirteen years by hunting and trapping in the Rocky Mountains, and he did not visit California again till the time of the Fremont expedition of 1844. He says of his first meeting with the explorer: "It had been a long time since I had been among civilized people. Went and saw my friends and acquaintances [in Howard county, Missouri], then took a trip to St. Louis, remained there a few days and was tired of remaining in the settlements. Took a steamer for the Upper Missouri and, as luck would have it, Colonel Fremont, then a Lieutenant, was aboard of the same boat." This was just before Fremont's first expedition in 1842, which Carson accompanied as guide and hunter. He joined Fremont again in 1843 at Bent's Fort, having met the expedition quite by accident at that place. He thought he would have a talk with Fremont, and his object as he says was "not to seek employment. . . . But when Fremont saw me again and requested me to join him I could not refuse, and again entered his employ as guide and hunter."

During the exploration of the Great Salt Lake Fremont determined to risk a trip to the island now on the Lucin cut-off and called by his name. He "arranged the India Rubber boat. Myself [Carson] and four others accompanied him. Were landed safely We ascended the highest mountain and under [a] shelving rock cut a large cross which is there to this day.

Next morning started back. Had not left the island more than a league behind when the clouds commenced gathering for a storm. Our boat leaking wind kept one man continually employed at the bellows. Fremont directed us to pull for our lives [telling us] if we did not arrive on shore before the storm commenced we will surely all perish. We done our best and

arrived in time to save ourselves in [an] hour the waters had risen eight or ten feet."

After the arrival at Fort Vancouver Carson continues: "In the meantime Fitzpatrick joined [us]. We started for Klamath Lake. A guide was employed and [we] arrived there safe and found a large village of Indians. . . . We pronounced them a mean, low-lived, treacherous race. Which we found to be a fact when we were in their country in 1846.

Here our guide left us, and we struck for California. Our course was through a barren, desolate and unexplored country till we reached the Sierra Nevada which we found covered with snow from one end to the other. We were nearly out of provisions, and cross the mountains we must, let the consequences be what they may. We went as far in the snow as we possibly could with animals, then was compelled to send them back. Then we commenced making a road through the snow. We beat it down with mallets. The snow was six feet on the level for three leagues. We made shoes [and walked] over the snow to find how far we would have to make a road. Found it to be the distance afore stated.

After we reached the extremity of the snow, we could see in the distance the green valley of the Sacramento and the Coast Range. I knew the place well, had been there seventeen years before. Our feelings can be imagined when we saw such beautiful country.

Having nothing to eat but mule meat, we returned to the place from which we had sent back our animals, and commenced our work of making the road. In fifteen days our task was accomplished. Sent back for the animals. They had, through hunger eaten one another's tails and the leather of the pack saddles, in fact everything they could lay hold of. They were in a deplorable condition and we would frequently kill one to keep it from dying; then use the meat for food.

We continued our march and by perseverance in making the road (for the wind had drifted the snow and in many places filled up the path which we had made) we finally got across and then commenced descending the mountain. Then we left Fitzpatrick in charge of the main party, Fremont, myself and five or six men, went ahead to Sutter's Fort for provisions.

The second day after leaving Fitzpatrick, Mr. Preus[s],

Fremont's assistant, got lost. We made search for him, travelled slowly, fired guns so that he could know where we were. We could not find him. In four days the old man returned. Had his pockets full of acorns, having had no other food since he left us. We were all rejoiced at his return, for the old man was much respected by the party.

We arrived safely at Sutter's Fort, three days after the return to camp of Mr. Preus[s]. When we arrived at the Fort we were naked and in as poor a condition as men possibly could be. We were well received by Mr. Sutter and were furnished in a princely manner everything we required by him. We remained about a month at the Fort [and] made all the necessary arrangements for our return, having found no difficulty in getting all we required.

About the first of April, 1844, we were ready to depart. During our stay at the Fort two of our party became deranged, I presume from the effects of starvation, and through receiving an abundance. One morning one of them jumped up [and] was perfectly wild. [He] inquired for his mule. It was tied close to him, but he started to the mountains to look for it. After some time, when his absence was known, men were sent in search of him. [They] looked through all the neighborhood, made inquiries of the Indians, but could hear nothing of him. [We] remained a few days awaiting his return, but as he did not come in, we departed. [We] left word with Sutter to make search, and if possible, find him. He done so, and, sometime after our departure, he was found. [He] was kept at the Fort and properly cared for until he got well, and then Mr. Sutter sent him to the States.

We took up the valley of the San Joaquin on our way home, we crossed the Sierra Nevada and Coast Range, where they join,—a beautiful, low pass, continued under the Coast Range till we struck the Spanish trail, then to the Mohave river, a small stream that rises in the Coast Range and is lost in the Great Basin. [We then went] down it to where the trail leaves the Mohave River. [Illegible sentence] We arrived early on the Mohave where we intended leaving it.

In the evening of the same day a Mexican man and boy came to our camp. They informed us that they were of a party of Mexicans from New Mexico, [that] they and two men and women were encamped a distance from the main party herding

horses, that they were mounted, the two men and women were in their camp, that a party of Indians charged on them for the purpose of running off their stock. They told the men and women to make their escape, that they would guard the horses. They ran the animals off from the Indians, left them at a Spring in the desert about thirty miles from our camp. We started for the place where they said they left their animals, found that they had been taken away by the Indians that had followed them.

The Mexican requested Fremont to aid him to retake his animals. He [Fremont] stated to the party that if any wished to volunteer for such purpose they might do so, that he would furnish animals for them to ride. Godey and myself volunteered with the expectation that some men of our party would join us. They did not. We two and the Mexican took the trail of [the] animals and commenced the pursuit. In twenty miles the Mexican's horse gave out. We sent him back and continued on. Travelled during the night, it was very dark. Had to dismount to feel for the trail. By sign we became aware that the Indians had passed after sunset.

We were much fatigued—required rest, unsaddled, wrapped ourselves in the wet saddle blankets and laid down. Could not make any fire for fear of it being seen. Passed a miserably cold night. In the morning we arose very early, went down in a deep ravine, made a small fire to warm ourselves, and as soon as it was light we again took the trail.

As the sun was rising [we] saw the Indians two miles ahead of us, encamped having a feast. They had killed five animals. We were compelled to leave our horses, they could not travel. We hid them among rocks, continued on the trail, crawled in among the horses. A young one got frightened, that frightened the rest. The Indians noticed the commotion among the animals [and] sprung to their arms. We now considered it time to charge on the Indians. They were about thirty in number. We charged. I fired, killing one. Godey, fired, missed, but reloaded and fired, killing another. There was only three shots fired and two [Indians] were killed. The remainder run. I then took the two rifles and ascended a hill to keep guard while Godey scalped the dead Indians. He scalped the one he had shot and was proceeded towards the one I had shot. He was not yet dead and was behind some rocks. As

Godey approached, he raised, let fly an arrow. It passed through Godey's shirt collar. He again fell and Godey finished him.

We gathered the animals, drove them to where we had concealed our own, changed our horses and drove to camp and safely arrived. Had all the animals, with the exception of those killed [by the Indians] for their feast.

We then marched on to where the Mexicans had left the two men and women. [The] men we discovered dead,—their bodies horribly mutilated. The women, we supposed, were carried into captivity. But such was not the case for a party, travelling in our rear, found their bodies very much mutilated and staked to the ground.

We continued our march and met no further molestation till we arrived on the Virgin [River], where the trail leaves it. There we intended to remain one day, our animals being much fatigued. We moved our camp a mile further on.

In looking among the mules a Canadian of the party missed one of his mules. He started back for the camp to get it, knowing that it must have been left. He did not inform Fremont or any of the party of his project. In a few hours, he was missed. Those of the horse guard said he had gone to our last camp to look for his mule. I was sent with three men to seek him. [We] arrived at the camp [and] he could not be found. [We] saw where he fell from his horse. [A] great deal of blood was seen. [We] knew that he was killed, searched for his body but it could not be found, followed the trail of his animal to where it crossed the river. [We then] returned to camp [and] informed Fremont of his death. He, in the morning with a party, went to seek the body—searched some time but without success. I was grieved on account of the death of the Canadian. He was a brave, noble-souled fellow. I had been in many an Indian fight with him and I am confident, if he was not taken unawares, that he surely killed one or two [Indians] before he fell.

We now left the Virgin, keeping to the Spanish trail, till we passed the Vega of Santa Clara, then [we] left the Spanish trail, struck towards the Utah Lake, crossed it, and went to the Winty [Uintah] River, thence to Green River, Brown's Hole, then to Little Snake River, to the mouth of St. Vrain's Fork.

We then crossed the point of mountain and struck the Laramie River below the New Park. [We] passed the New and [journeyed] on into the Old Park. From there [we travelled] to the Balla [Bayou] Salado, the headwaters of the south fork of the Platte, then to the Arkansas River where it leaves the mountains, down it to Bent's fort. We arrived at Bent's fort July 1844, and remained till after the 4th. Then Fremont and party started for the States and I left for Taos.

On the 4th of July Mr. Bent gave Fremont and party a splendid dinner. The day was celebrated as well, if not better, than in many towns of the States."

The route of this expedition has been sufficiently described in Fremont's reports and memoirs and in Dellenbaugh's "Fremont and '49." If there ever was the slightest doubt at just what point the Sierras were crossed from the east, it has been removed by the discovery of Kit Carson's name and the date, 1844, cut in an old pine at the very summit of Carson Pass on the divide between the American River and West Carson Canyon. According to the Stockton Record (April 2, 1921), the tree was cut down in 1899 and the date slab removed to Fort Sutter. A bronze memorial tablet has been placed at the summit of the pass.

The date of arrival at Fort Sutter is confirmed by an entry in Captain John A. Sutter's Diary (San Francisco Argonaut, Jan. 26, 1878): "March 6, 1842 [1844]. Cap't Fremont arrived at the port [fort] with Kit Carson, told me that he was an officer of the U. S. and left a party behind in Distress and on foot, the few surviving Mules was packed only with the most necessary, I received him politely and his Company likewise as an old acquaintance. the next morning I furnished them with fresh horses, a Vaquero with a pack Mule loaded with Necessary Supplies for his men."

Carson's part in the third Fremont expedition and the events which followed is of peculiar interest. It was at this period that he performed his greatest services and for some of his activities then he has been considerably censured. Referring to this trip Carson says—

After the return to Taos in 1845 "Dick Owens and I concluded that, as we had rambled enough (that) it would be advisable for us to go and settle on some good stream and

make us a farm. We went to Little Cimmeron, about forty-five miles east of Taos, built ourselves little huts, put in considerable grain, and commenced getting out timber to enlarge our improvements. [We] remained there till August of same year.

The year previous, I had given my word to Fremont that, in case he should return for the purpose of making any more exploration, that I would willingly join him. He reached Bent's fort about the 1st of August made inquiries where I was, and heard of my being on the Cimmeron. [He] sent an express to me. Then Owens and I sold out for about half it was worth, and we started to join Fremont, and we both received employment."

At the crossing of the Desert of the Great Salt Lake they pioneered the route known later to the emigrants as the "Hastings Cut-Off." In Carson's words—

"Fremont was bound to cross. Nothing was impossible for him to perform if required in his explorations.

Before we started it was arranged that at a certain time of [the] next day he would ascend the mountain near his camp, have with him his telescope, so that we could be seen by him, and if we found grass or water, we should make a smoke, which would be a signal to him to advance. We travelled on about sixty miles, no water or grass, not a particle of vegetation could be found (as level and bare as a barn floor) before we struck the mountains on the west side of the Lake. Water and grass was there in abundance. The fire was made. Fremont saw it and moved on with his party. Archambeau started back and me(e)t him when about half way across the desert. He camped on the desert one night, and next evening at dark, he got across, having lost only a few animals."

The Sierras were crossed near Donner Lake, on the path which the Stevens-Townsend emigrant party of 1844 had traversed with wagons, and along the route later followed by the unfortunate Donner party and the Central Pacific Railway. Carson says Fremont went up the Carson River, but this is an evident mistake.

Before crossing the mountains Talbot and Walker with most of the men and animals were sent south, as the season was late, to enter the San Joaquin Valley thru the low Walker

Pass and Kern Valley. Fremont, Carson and a small outfit took the more direct route in order to procure needed supplies from Fort Sutter and the intention was then to send a relief to the southern party.

This relief according to Carson "Went up the San Joaquin valley, crossed [it] where it comes out of the mountain, and then on to King's River; up it to the headwaters. During our march from snow and travelling over rocks our cattle became very tender footed. From the head of King's River [probably the North Fork] we started back for the prairie and when we arrived we had no cattle, they having all given out. [We] had to leave behind all except those we killed for meat. As we were getting from the mountains some Indians crawled into our camp and killed two of our mules. . . . Arrived at the fort safely. All were afoot. Lived principally on the meat of wild horses that we killed on the march."

Fremont's troop then left for San José, where they met Walker and Martin who had been sent out as messengers from the Talbot-Walker division which had remained encamped eighteen days at Walker Pass—(Martin MS., D122 Bancroft Library). Carson who, with Owens, was dispatched to look for Talbot's party, says—"We met them on the San Joaquin, guided them to San José."

Carson's mistake in taking the King's river route was due to Walker's misunderstanding of the meeting place. Walker, who had been in the San Joaquin Valley twelve years previously, had mistaken the Kern for the King's River, and had given the relief expedition a needless trip thru the High Sierras of the King's River in the roughest sort of country at a time of year (October) when the snow was beginning to fall and the nights were icy cold. This is the earliest recorded trip into this part of the Sierra Nevada. The narrative continues—

"After we had all got together we set out for Monterey to get an outfit. When we arrived within about 30 miles of Monterey, Fremont received a very impertinent order from General Castro, ordering him to immediately leave the country, and if he did not, that he would drive him out.

We packed up at dark, moved back about 10 miles to a little mountain, found a good place, and made a camp. General Castro came with several hundred men and established his

headquarters near us. He would frequently fire his big guns to frighten us, thinking by such demonstrations he could make us leave.

We had in the party about forty men armed with rifles. Castro had several hundred soldiers of Artillery, Cavalry, and Infantry. Fremont received expresses from Monterey from Americans advising him to leave, that the Mexicans were strong and would surely attack us. He sent them word that he had done nothing to raise the wrath of the Mexican Commander, that he was in the performance of a duty, that he would let the consequence[s] be what they may, execute a retreat he would not.

We remained in our position on the mountain for three days, had become tired of waiting for the attack of the valiant Mexican general. We then started for the Sacramento River, up it to Peter Lawson's, there Fremont intended getting his outfit for the homeward trip. [We] remained some ten days. During our stay at Lawson's, some Americans that were settled in the neighborhood came in stating that there were about 1000 Indians in the vicinity making preparations to attack the settlements. [They] requested assistance of Fremont to drive them back. He and party, and some few Americans that lived near, started for the Indian encampment. Found them to be in great force, as was stated. They were attacked. The number killed I cannot say. It was a perfect butchery. Those not killed fled in all directions, and we returned to Lawson's. Had accomplished what we went for and given the Indians such a chastisement that would be long before they ever again would feel like attacking the settlements.

We remain[ed] some time at Lawson's, received the best of treatment, and finished [getting together] our outfit. Started for the Columbia River."

Bancroft notes that "Fremont's return to the coast [Monterey] seemed utterly inconsistent with his previously announced designs." Carson's statement that they intended going there "to get an outfit" seems plausible in view of the losses sustained in the Sierras and the failure of those in charge at Fort Sutter to supply the commander with everything he needed (cf. Bidwell, *Century Magazine*, Vol. 19, New Series, p. 518), however, the expedition had been recruiting in the vicinity of San José for over a month. Fremont's own stated reasons for

a southwesterly movement have been vague and contradictory. Carson seems particularly careful thruout his narrative to refrain from political discussion and the impression is gained that he knew considerably more about his good friend, the Captain, than he thought desirable to tell. Martin's manuscript gives a detailed account of the Indian butchery near Peter Lassen's—an affair too unnecessarily revolting to prompt repetition here.

The trip north from Lassen's to the Klamath Lakes took fourteen days. The route as determined on modern U. S. G. S. maps from Fremont's recorded observations of latitude, elevation and topography led away from the Sacramento river at the mouth of Battle Creek, thence to the North Fork of Cow Creek (April 27), on past Round Mountain to Montgomery Creek, up this to the divides west and south of Burney Butte across the valley of Hat Creek to the Pit River between Beaver Creek and Horse Valley (April 29), up Pit River to four miles north of Lookout (April 30), thence by a long dry march to the southeastern corner of Tule Lake (May 1), around the east side of the lake to the Lost River in Poe Valley (May 4), across the Link River at or just below the lower end of Upper Klamath Lake, up Long Lake Valley to the second small stream north of Aspen Lake (Denny's Branch, where the Indians made their first surprise attack on May 9), thence around the eastern border of the Upper Klamath Lake as far as Cherry Creek (called by Fremont, Ambuscade Creek) where camp was made May 7. The next day Gillespie's messenger arrived and Fremont took a few men and went back to meet the officer. Subsequent events, altho they have been told and retold, may bear repetition in Carson's own words—

“A few days after we left [Lassen's], information was received in California that war was declared between the United States and Mexico. Lieutenant Gillespie, U. S. Marines, and six men were sent after us to have us to come back. He had travelled about three hundred miles. His animals were giving out and the rate he was travelling he had but poor hopes of overtaking us. He then concluded to mount two men on his best animals and send them in advance. They came up to us on the Lake, gave the communications to Fremont, and he having but poor faith in Klamath Indians, feared the situation of Gillespie and party, [and] concluded to go and meet him. [He] took ten picked men, travelled about sixty miles, and met him encamped for the night.

He sat up till 12 or 1 o'clock reading the letters which he had received from the States; Owens and myself were rolled in our saddle blankets laying near the fire, the night being cold. Shortly after Fremont had laid down I heard a noise as of an axe striking, jumped up, saw there were Indians in camp, gave the alarm. The Indians had then tomahawked two men, [Basil] Lajeunesse and a Delaware, and were proceeding to the fire where four Delawares were lying. They heard the alarm, Crane, a Delaware, got up, took a gun, but not his own. The one he got was not loaded. He was not aware of it [and] kept trying to fire. Stood erect—received five arrows in the breast, four mortal [wounds]. Then fell.

The evening before I fired off my gun for the purpose of cleaning it. [I had] accidentally broken the tube—had nothing but my pistol. Rushed on him, fired, cut the string that held his tomahawk. Had to retire, having no other [weapon]. Maxwell fired on him, hit him in the leg. As he was turning, Step fired, struck him in the back, [the] ball passing near the heart, and he fell. The balance of his party then run. He was the bravest Indian I ever saw. If his men had been as brave as himself, we surely would all have been killed. We lost three men and one slightly wounded. If we had not gone to meet Gillespie, he and party would have been murdered. The Indians evidently were on his trail for that purpose. We apprehend[ed] no danger that night, and the men being much fatigued no guard was posted. It was the first and last time we failed in posting guard. Of the three men killed Lajeunesse was particularly regretted. He had been with us in every trip that had been made. All of them were brave, good men. The only consolation we had for the loss was that, if we had not arrived, Gillespie and his four men would have been killed. We lost three so two lives had been saved.

After the Indians left, each of us took a tree, expecting they would return. We remained so posted until day light. We then packed up, took the bodies of the dead and started for [the] camp of the main party.

Had proceeded about ten miles. Could not possibly carry the bodies any further. [We then] went about half a mile (of) [away from] the trail and interred them, covering the graves with logs and brush, so that there was but little probability of their being discovered. [We] would have taken the

bodies to our camp, but on account of the timber being so thick the bodies knocked against the trees and becoming much bruised, we concluded to bury them when we did. We met our camp this evening, they had received orders to follow our trail. Camped for [the] night, next morning only to go a few miles. Left 15 men in our old camp, concealed for the purpose of discovering the movements of the Indians. We had not left more than half an hour when two Indians came. They were killed and in short time their scalps were in our camp. Fremont concluded to return to California, but [decided to] take a different route from that [by] which we had last entered the country, by going on the opposite side of the lake. We were now encamped on a stream of the lake nearly opposite to the place where we were encamped when we had the three men killed. In the morning I was sent ahead with ten chosen men, with orders that, if I discovered any large village of Indians, to send word and in case I should be seen by them for me to act as I thought best.

I had not gone more than ten miles [when] I discovered a large village of about 50 lodges and, at the same time by the commotion in their camp I knew that they had seen us, and considering it useless to send for reinforcements, I determined to attack them, charged on them, fought for some time, killed a number and the balance fled.

Their houses were built of flag, beautifully woven. They had been fishing [and] had in their houses some ten wagon loads of fish they had caught. All their fishing tackle, camp equipage, etc. was there. I wished to do them as much damage as I could, so I directed their houses to be set on fire. The flag being dry it was a beautiful sight. The Indians had commenced the war with us without cause, and I thought they should be chastised in a summary manner. And they were severely punished.

Fremont saw at a distance the fire, [and] knowing that we were engaged, hurried to join us, but arrived too late for the sport. We moved on about two miles from where the Indian village had been, and camped for the night. After encamping Owens and twenty men were sent back to watch for Indians. In an hour he sent us word that 50 Indians had returned to camp, I suppose to hunt their lost, and bury their dead. As soon as the information was received Fremont, with

six men, started to him, taking a route different from that which Owens had taken, so as to keep concealed. As we got near the camp [we] only saw one Indian. As soon as he was seen we charged him. I was in advance. Got within ten feet of him. My gun snapped. He drew his bow to fire on me. I threw myself on one side of my horse to save myself. Fremont saw the danger in which I was, run his horse over the Indian throwing him on the ground, and before he could recover he was shot. I consider that Fremont saved my life, for, in all probability, if he had not run over the Indian as he did, I would have been shot. We could find no more Indians, and fearing that the party seen by Owens had returned to attack our camp, we returned. Arrived, but the Indians did not make an attack.

Next morning we struck out for the Valley of the Sacramento, about four days march. Maxwell and Archambeau were travelling parallel with the party, about three miles distant, hunting. They saw an Indian coming towards them. As soon as the Indian saw them he took from his quiver some young crows that were tied thereon, concealed them in the grass, and continued approaching. As soon as he was within forty yards he commenced firing. They did not intend to hurt him, wishing to talk, but the Indian keeping up a continuous fire and having shot rather close, they were compelled through self defence to fire on him. They done so and [at] the first shot he fell, [and] was immediately scalped.

We kept on till we struck the Sacramento, and in passing down the river there was ahead of us a deep and narrow cañon. The Indians supposing that we would go through it, placed themselves on each side for the purpose of attacking us as we passed. But we crossed the river and did not go into the cañon.

Godey, myself, and another man, I have forgotten his name, took after them. We were mounted on mules. They could not be caught. One man, brave[r] than the rest, hid himself behind a large rock and awaited our approach. We rode up near him. He came from his hiding place and commenced firing arrows very rapidly. We had to run back, being kept so busy dodging from his arrows, that it was impossible to fire. Retreated from the reach of his arrows. I dismounted and fired. My shot had the desired effect. He was scalped. [He] had a

fine bow and beautiful quiver full of arrows, which I presented to Lt. Gillespie. He was a brave Indian [and] deserved a better fate, but he had placed himself on the wrong path.

Continued our march, and next day, in the evening, Step and another man had gone out to hunt. We had nothing to eat in our camp. [Were] nearly starving. They saw an Indian watching the camp. I presume he was waiting so that he might steal a mule. They gradually approached him—he was unaware of their presence—and, when near enough, fired. He, receiving his death wound and then was scalped. The hunters returned having found no other game. We kept on our march to Peter Lawson's, had no difficulty on the route. Then [went] down the Sacramento to the Buttes. Here camp was made to await positive orders in regard to the war, and to hunt."

Fremont's leisurely movements, his side trip into the northwestern part of the Sacramento Valley and return to Lassen's, and his slow rate of travel (about twelve miles a day) on the way to Klamath Lake give one the impression that he was in no hurry to leave California and was trying to kill time and keep within striking distance of the settlements.

Carson gave a verbal account of the night fight on Denny's Creek to a Washington newspaper. This is the one quoted in Lancey's "Cruise" (San José Pioneer, Feb. 1, 1879—Apr. 2, 1881) and in Sabin. Fremont tells us that the Indians showered arrows on the little party during the remaining hours of darkness and that the men hung blankets from the trees to protect themselves. Carson later told Captain Johnston (in Emory, *Notes of a Military Reconnaissance to San Diego in California, 1848*, p. 579) "that he never knew how fine a weapon the bow and arrow was until he had them fired at him in the night; at that time they are more sure than firearms for they are fired by the feel."

Martin in his recollections says "Capt. Owens who was sleeping with me was the first to give the alarm. He woke me saying 'I think I hear someone groaning,'" etc. Martin also gives a story of the fight, mentioned by Carson, at the village—

"As we rounded the head of the lake we saw on the other side of the lake, nearly opposite where our camp had been attacked, some smoke arising.

Fifteen of us under Kit Carson were sent forward to re-

connoitre. Upon nearing the vicinity of the smoke we ascended a ridge to get a better view. From here we saw a village but a short distance away which had been hidden from us by a high bank. The Indians discovered us at the same time. Between the village and us there lay a small river whose shores were skirted with willows, among which we could see the Indians on the same side we were on. Kit Carson proposed that we should charge down on them without waiting for the arrival of the rest of the company. We accordingly dashed down the side of the ridge at a breakneck pace but before we reached the river they had all crossed to the opposite side in canoes. On the other side they made a stand and shot at us with their arrows but they did us no harm as the river was at this point about 120 yards wide which required the elevating of their arrows to reach us. We opened fire and killed some 20 or more before they broke and run.

The river being too deep to cross here we started upstream until Carson shouted, 'Here is a good place,' whereupon we all jumped our horses off the bank 3 or 4 feet high into the river. Instead of shallow water we found it from 8 to 12 feet deep and as a matter of course all of us went over our heads . . . got our powder wet and we would have been in a fine fix if the rest of our party had not arrived at this moment."

Fremont's route led him around the north end of the Upper Klamath Lake by way of 3 mile (Corral) creek (May 11), and 7 mile (Torrey) creek (May 12). Leaving the lake at Naylox they reached the Pit River at Horse Creek (Russell's Branch—May 19), thence across country to Hat Creek near Great Spring (May 20), up over Noble Pass just north of Lassen Peak and down into the headwaters of the North Fork of Battle Creek (May 21). May 30, 1846, found the expedition encamped at the southeastern base of the Marysville Buttes in what is now Sutter county. This camp, "by invitation" says Ide, was a general rendezvous for excited visitors representing the American population of that part of California. Many things had contributed to the habitual restlessness of the mountain men, trappers and pioneer settlers,—Castro's threatening orders to Fremont at the Gavilan, the sudden return of the explorer following the arrival of Gillespie with what everyone supposed were secret instructions, the posting of proclamations requiring the expulsion of Americans from the Department of California, groundless rumors that Spanish Californians were inciting the

Indians to attack settlers and their crops, knowledge of Castro's military preparations—all of this drew the American settlers to Fremont's camp to ask his advice and his cooperation in proposed resistance to the government.

Tipton Lindsey (*Overland Monthly Magazine*, 2d Series, vol. 27, pp. 218-228) has recorded the narrative of George W. Williams, one of the participants in the Bear Flag affair. Williams' statement credits Carson with having led the attack on the horses of the Spanish lieutenant Arce, but this is highly questionable. Sutter says (*Personal Reminiscences*, Calif. MS. D 14, Bancroft Library): "Merrit, a mountaineer, formerly a long time with me, but now with Fremont, came to me . . . and told me he was going to seize those horses [Arce's] for Fremont, which he did."

Bancroft mentions several accounts of the horse raid. None of these agree as to details, number of horses, men, etc. Williams is the only one who says that Carson was a member of the raiding party. Others claim that Swift or Ezekiel Merritt led the volunteers. The rather unreliable Martin states—

"Fremont called us together and told us that we were going to take the country and called for volunteers to go and capture this band of horses. Fallon told us that we would probably find them on the Mocasomy [Mokelumne River]. That evening 15 of us under Capt. Swift went and caught them at daylight next morning. We arrested 17 men, 14 officers and 2 privates and 1 citizen . . . We took back with us about 400 head of horses and returned to Johnson and Kaisers ranch on the Bear river."

Ide (*Scraps of California History*) reports that when he visited Fremont's camp on the evening of June 10, asking the Captain for advice and assistance, "several persons, among whom was Kit Carson, begged of Fremont their discharge from the service of the exploring expedition that they might be at liberty to join us. This was peremptorily refused. Fremont in my hearing expressly declared that he was not at liberty to afford us the least aid or assistance." Unless Ide's date is incorrect, it is not easy to see how Carson could have been present on the horse raid, which occurred on the 10th. Carson does not mention the incident. His narrative continues—

"A party was sent from here [Camp on Feather River at the "Hock Farm"] to surprise Sonoma, a military post. They

captured it, took one General [M. G. Vallejo] and two Captains [Prudon and Salvador Vallejo] prisoners, several cannon and a number of small arms. After the Fort had been taken Fremont had heard positively of the war being declared. [He] then marched forward to Sonoma and found it in the possession of the men he had sent in advance.

During our stay here, General Castro ordered one of his Captains [de la Torre] and a large force from San Francisco to attack us and drive us from the country. He came over, found two of our men [Fowler and Cowie] (that were carrying news to the settlers that Sonoma was taken and that war was declared) whom he brutally murdered. He found that we were anxious to meet him and commenced his retreat. We followed him six days and nights. He could not be found. He made his escape, leaving his animals, and he reached San Francisco and from there to [the] Pueblo of Los Angeles—Castro joining him—their object being to reorganize their forces.”

A large part of what Carson says regarding Castro's movements was popular hearsay of the time and is inaccurate. Fowler and Cowie, the two murdered men, had been sent out from Sonoma to get a barrel of powder from Moses Carson, Kit's brother, who was a foreman at the Fitch rancho of Sotoyome on the Russian River where Healdsburg is now situated. On the way they were set upon by a guerilla band of Californians, in no way connected with de la Torre's outfit, and were, according to report, foully murdered (Bancroft, *Hist. Calif.* vol. 5, p. 160-161). The alleged manner of their death enraged the Americans who later, under Carson, adopted an almost equally brutal means of retaliation. Ide, the Bear Flag commander at Sonoma despatched H. L. Ford with a small force to pursue Padilla, supposed to be on the Marin peninsula, and rescue prisoners thought to be in his hands. A fight occurred at Olompali and de la Torre, who had joined Padilla's forces, being worsted, retreated toward San Rafael. The Americans went back to Sonoma. Fremont now put in a belated appearance (June 26), joined the Bear Flag forces, marched to San Rafael and, not finding de la Torre, peacefully billeted himself in the Mission buildings, establishing his outposts on the surrounding hills (Bancroft, *loc. cit.* Martin, *loc. cit.*).

Martin who claims to have been on guard says: “I discovered a boat come in and run up a small creek. I reported it

and 5 of us went out and captured 3 officers that had come over to join de la Torre. They were asked if they had any dispatches and they said no. We shot them then and there and upon searching their bodies found dispatches which we took to Fremont."

Jasper O'Farrell (Los Angeles Star, Sept. 27, 1856,—quoted from Bancroft), a reliable witness, later testified that Kit Carson was in charge of the squad that murdered the three Californians. He said Carson claimed to have done the deed unwillingly by Fremont's order. "After starting Carson turned back . . . to ask Fremont, 'Captain shall I take those men prisoners.' The reply, given with a wave of the hand, was, 'I have no room for prisoners.' This agrees with statements which Carson made a few days later to his friend Wm. Boggs of Napa (Ide, *Scraps of California History*). Boggs says—

"The celebrated Kit Carson killed the first one. He discovered and reported them to Fremont, his superior officer, as prisoners his squad had taken, and asked him what he should do with them. F's reply to Carson was that he 'had no use for prisoners; but do your duty.'

Kit returned in company with one or two others of Fremont's command, killed an old Mexican and his two sons. This circumstance was related to me by Kit Carson himself in my house at Sonoma where he visited me. I knew Kit Carson in the Rocky Mountains and he and my brother were intimate friends at Bent's Fort, on the Arkansas River, where they were traders with the various tribes of Indians on the Plains—their traffic being in buffalo robes and peltries.

Carson was a bold and daring man when an emergency required, and as gentle as a lamb when engaged in peaceful pursuits. I told him I did not approve of that act of retaliation; that he should have pursued the guilty ones . . . But Kit Carson had been trained to Indian warfare and its customs were deeply impressed on his mind at an early age."

The significant truth of this last statement may be checked against the meagre accounts we have of Carson's boyhood. He himself says—

"I was born on the 24th of December, 1809 in Madison county, Kentucky. My parents moved to Missouri when I was one year old. They settled in what is now Howard county.

For two or three years after our arrival we had to remain fortified, and it was necessary to have men stationed at the extremities of the fields for the protection of those that were laboring."

An important account of Carson's early surroundings is that of Wm. F. Switzler (*Missouri Hist. Soc. Collections*, vol. 2, pgs. 35-45), who obtained his information from Kit's sister, Mrs. Mary Rubey.

Carson's family, who associated and intermarried with the Boones, were Kentucky people of the hardest frontier type. It has been stated that Kit himself was a grandson of Daniel Boone, but this is not correct. Kit Carson's niece, Mrs. Fannie O. Avery of Winsor, Missouri, in a letter to me confirms the genealogy recorded by Sabin in his book "*Kit Carson Days*."

Fremont returned to Sonoma on June 29 and found the garrison prepared to resist Castro's expected arrival. According to Ide the advent of Fremont's men in the early dawn caused a general alarm and Ide himself stood prepared to give the signal, "Fire!" to the impatient gunners who waited with matches burning. Just then the "well known voice of Kit Carson" cried out "My God! They swing the matches" and a near tragedy was soon forgotten in a comic mock-charge by the troops of Fremont and Ford. Fremont immediately left for San Rafael again on the lookout for de la Torre, only to find that the Spaniard had made good his retreat across to San Pablo in an old launch "stolen by permission" from Richardson, the Englishman, at Sausalito.

Fremont took "twelve of his best shots" including Carson and crossed to San Francisco, then Yerba Buena. Wading ashore, the gunsmith, Stepp, spiked, with professional skill, the cannon in the abandoned Castillo at Fort Point.

The fourth of July found the whole crowd back in Sonoma enjoying Vallejo's wine and declaring the independence of California. Carson proceeds with his narrative—

"Fremont left a strong force at Sonoma. All the American settlers by this time had joined him. He then departed for Sutter's fort, and arrived safe. He placed the fort under military command. Left General Vallejo(s), the two Captains and an American named Leace [Leese] (brother-in-law to the General), as prisoners there, in charge of the gentleman, to whom

he gave the command. [He] then departed to Monterey. It had been taken before our arrival, by the navy, under command of Commodore Sloat. A few days after our arrival Sloat left, and Stockton assumed the command. Here we learned that General Castro had made his escape, [and] had gone to Los Angeles to organize. We found that we could not catch the Mexicans by following them on land, so Fremont proposed, if furnished a frigate, to take his men to San Diego. He then [would] get animals and go drive the Mexican troops from Los Angeles. The frigate Cyane was furnished him, com'd. by Captain Dupont, a noble-souled fellow. In four days, [we] arrived at our destination. Our forces were landed 150 strong. Sufficiency of horses could not be procured at San Diego. Men were sent to scour the country [and to] press into service [the] horses. We finally were mounted [and] started for Los Angeles."

At the request of Sloat, who had raised the flag on July 7, Fremont left for Monterey, going by way of the San Joaquin Valley and probably Pacheco Pass, stopping on the 17th at San Juan where he joined Sloat's dragoons and arriving at Monterey on the 19th. Here his dusty column of ragged and bristly-bearded mountain men presented a wild spectacle for the peaceful inhabitants to gaze upon.

William F. Swasey (Calif. MS. D 200 Bancroft Library) says that at Monterey the Englishmen of the Collingwood visited Fremont's camp out of curiosity to see the frontiersmen, and begged the latter "to give them an exhibition of their skill with the rifle, and for this purpose they put up as targets Mexican dollars to be shot at, at a hundred and fifty yards off hand, each man hitting the dollar to become possessor of it." The young Englishmen soon found that there was a scarcity of coin in their pockets.

Among the Americans were Kit Carson, Joe Walker, Alexis Godey, Dick Owens, Jerome Davis, Pruett St. Clair, and Dr. Robert Semple. The latter was a well educated versatile man with a mind much above the ordinary. He was slim, six feet eight inches high, and dressed in scanty buckskins presented a ludicrous appearance. "His pants were so short, by having become wet and shrunk, that they came just below the knee and were fastened round his moccasins with a strap He was so ungainly that the men used to say that when he was

mounted upon a mule, he was compelled to wear his spurs upon the calves of his legs in order to reach the mule's belly. There was a little man on Bear River by the name of Johnson, who was scarcely five feet high, and Captain Sutter remarked, when he first saw Semple, 'By Jupiter! There vash a man so tall that if he spread his legs apart, Johnson run right troo him.'"

Fremont found that Sloat wished to escape the responsibility for conducting further conquests and Stockton having no such compunctions succeeded him. Fremont sailed on July 26 and reached San Diego on July 30, according to Carson's reckoning. A garrison was left at San Diego and the start for Los Angeles was made August 8. Here, says Carson: "The Mexicans having heard of our approach, though they were 700 strong, fled. The General, Governor, and other officers, for Sonora, the balance to all parts, [just] so they did not come in contact with Americans.

We arrived within a league of the town, awaited a short time, and Stockton, agreeably to the plan arranged before our departure from Monterey, arrived with a party of sailors and marines. The sailors and marines were as brave men as I ever saw, and for the Commodore, it is useless for me to say anything, as he is known to be the bravest of the brave.

We took possession of the town, remained some time, and on the 5 Sept. [18]46, I was ordered to Washington as bearer of despatches, having with me 15 men.

I was ordered to go to Washington in 60 days, which I would have done if not directed by General Kearny to join him. When I got within 10 miles of the Copper Mines I discovered an Apache village. It was about 10^o a. m. They were at war. I knew that by staying where we were we would be seen, and, if we endeavored to pass them, they would also see us. So I had a consultation with Maxwell and we came to the conclusion to take for the timber and approach them cautiously, and if we were seen, to be as close as possible to them at the time of the discovery. We kept on, had arrived about 100 yards of their village when they saw us. They were somewhat frightened to see us. We said we were friends, were en route to New Mexico, [and] wished to trade animals. They appeared friendly. We chose a good place for our camp. They visited us and

we commenced trading and procured of them a remount which was much required, our animals all having nearly given out.

We then started and in four days arrived at the first of the settlements. At our departure from California we had only 25 lbs. of dried meat, having a quantity of pinola. At the River village we got some corn. We would dry the corn by the fire, parch the corn, then eat it. Not having other food during our trip we suffered considerably for food.

On the 6th of October, [18]46, I met General Kearn(e)y on his march to California. He ordered me to join him as his guide. I done so and Fitzpatrick continued on with the despatches.

On the 18th [15th] of October we left the Rio Del Norte, December 3d [2nd] arrived at Warner's Ranch, and marched on for San Diego. On the 6th we heard of a party of Californians encamped on our route, probably one hundred in number. When we arrived within ten or fifteen miles of their camp, General Kearn(e)y sent Lieutenant Hammond with three or four Dragoons ahead to examine their position. He went, was accidentally discovered, [and] saw the encampment as reported. They were in an Indian village. He then returned to us and gave the information found. The General then determined to attack them. We packed up about one o'clock in the morning and moved on. When within a mile of their camp we discovered their spies that were out watching the road, and our movements. The trot and then the gallop was ordered to pursue the spies. They retreated to their camp.

I was ordered to join Captain Johnston. He had fifteen men under his command. We were to proceed in advance. Our chief object was to get the animals belonging to the Californians. Captain Moore, having a part of two companies of Dragoons and a party of twenty-five volunteers that had come from San Diego, was ordered to attack the main body. They were attacked, only fought about ten or fifteen minutes, then they retreated. When we were within 100 yards of their camp, my horse fell, threw me and my rifle was broken into two pieces. I came very near being trodden to death. Being in advance the whole command had to pass over me. I finally saved myself by crawling from under them. I then ran on about 100 yards to where the fight had commenced. A Dragoon had been killed, I took his gun and cartridge box

and joined the *mêlée*. Johnston and two or three of the dragoons were then killed. The Californians retreated, pursued by Moore for about three quarters of a mile. Moore had about 40 men mounted on horses, the balance on mules.

Two or three days before, we heard of a party of Californians that were en route to Sonora. Lieutenant Davidson and twenty-five dragoons and I were sent to surprise them. Done so and captured 70 or 80 head of animals, from which Moore got some 40 horses that were gentle and on which he mounted his men. The command in the pursuit had got very much scattered. The enemy saw the advantage, wheeled and cut off the forty that were in advance, and out of the forty killed and wounded thirty-six. Captain Moore [was] among the slain, also Lieutenant Hammond. General Kearn(e)y [was] severely wounded and nearly every officer of the command was wounded.

Lieutenant Davidson, in charge of two Howitzers, came up. Before he could do anything every one of his party were killed or wounded, and one piece taken by the enemy. They captured it by lassoing the horse, fastening the lasso to the saddle and then running off. They got about 300 yds. and endeavored to fire it at us, but could not. It was impossible for Lieutenant Davidson to do anything, having lost all his men, and one piece, and was himself lanced several times through the clothing, and one [ball] passing through [the] cantle of his saddle, which if the Californian had not missed his aim he also would be numbered among the slain.

We rallied in a point of rocks near where the advance had been defeated, remained there that night, the reason [being we did] not dare move on, and having a number of dead to bury. The dead were buried at the hours of 12 or 1 o'clock that night.

Next day we moved on. I had command of about 15 men and was ordered in advance. Marched about seven miles. During the night the Californians had received reinforcements. They were now about 150 strong. During the day they would show themselves on every hill ahead of us.

Late in the evening we [were] still on the march, being within about 400 yards from the water where we intended to camp. They then charged on us, coming in two bodies. We were compelled to retreat about 200 yds. to a hill of rocks that

was to our left. After we had gained our position on the hill, the Californians took another hill, about 100 yards. still to our left, and then commenced firing. Captains Emory and Turner took the command of what dragoons we had, charged the enemy on the hill, routed them, giving us full possession of their position. There [we] remained for the night.

The day on which we had the first fight, Kearn(e)y had sent three men as [an] express to San Diego to Commodore Stockton. This morning they had returned within five hundred yards of our camp. Were taken prisoners by the enemy in our sight. The day previous the horse of a Mexican Lieutenant was shot and he [was] taken prisoner. The parley was sounded and then [they] exchanged the Lieutenant for one of our men that was prisoner.

The place on which we were stationed had barely water enough for the men to drink. We had nothing to eat but mule meat. The animals were turned loose. As soon as any would get from the reach of our guns, they would be driven off by the enemy. The Mexicans had command of the water,—probably about 500 yds. in advance. Kearn(e)y concluded to march on let the consequences be what they would. About 12 o'clock we were ready for the march, the wounded in ambulances [in litters on mule back]. The enemy, seeing our movements, saddled up, formed in our rear about 500 yds., the men being placed about 10 feet apart so that our artillery could do them but little damage.

Kearn(e)y had a council with his officers, they all knew that, as soon as we would leave the hill, we would again have to fight and, in our present condition it was not advisable. They came to the conclusion to send for reinforcements to San Diego. Lieutenant Beale, of the navy, and myself, volunteered to undertake to carry the intelligence to Stockton.

As soon as dark we started on our mission. In crawling over the rocks and brush our shoes making noise we took them off; fastened them under our belts. We had to crawl about two miles. We could see three rows of sentinels, all ahorseback, we would often have to pass within 20 yards of one. We got through, but had the misfortune to have lost our shoes, had to travel over a country, covered with prickly pear and rocks, barefoot.

Got to San Diego the next night. Stockton immediately

ordered 160 or 170 men to march to Kearn(e)y's relief. They were under the command of a Lieutenant, [and had] one cannon, which was drawn by the men by attaching to it ropes.

I remained at San Diego, Lieutenant Beale was sent aboard of frigate Congress; had become deranged from fatigue of the service performed, did not entirely recover for two years.

The next night the reinforcements reached Kearn(e)y. They lay by during the day, travelled by night. The enemy, however, discovered their approach, then fled. Kearn(e)y and [the] party then joined and moved on to San Diego having no further molestation."

The date Carson gives as the start of his first great ride is doubtless correct. Bancroft would put it somewhat earlier, but Richman (*California under Spain and Mexico*) plausibly assumes that Carson was not sent till after Fremont had received appointment as military commandant on September 2. Carson went from Los Angeles nearly to Santa Fé in thirty-one days and as he said later, wore "out and killed thirty-four mules" doing so. From remarks made to Capt. Johnston on the return trip to California we know that Carson led Kearny back over nearly the same trail he had selected on the way east. This is the route down the Gila and across the lower Colorado Desert shown on Emory's map. Johnston's report (*In Emory, loc. cit. p. 572-614*) contains many references to incidents of both the eastward and the return journeys.

The "Copper Mines" were old diggings on the headwaters of the Mimbres River in New Mexico where Carson worked for McKnight in 1828. Carson had traversed nearly this entire route with Young on his return to New Mexico from California in 1831.

Carson met Col. Kearny on October 6, about three miles south of Socorro, New Mexico, and less than 150 miles from his own family in Taos. We can appreciate Kearny's desire to engage Carson as guide when we refer to a note on p. 571 of Johnston's report under date of October 5. "We had considerable discussion this evening about the route to the Gila; the guide we engaged had not contemplated the difficulties beyond the point where he struck the Gila, and he inclines to go 18 miles south of the Copper Mines."

Carson never forgave General Kearny for turning him

back from his mission. Two years later he gave Senator Benton a long statement of his grievances, at the close of which he remarks, true friend of Fremont that he was:

"This statement I make at the request of Senator Benton, but had much rather be examined in a court of justice, face to face with General Kearn(e)y, and there tell at once all that I know about General Kearn(e)y's battles and conduct in California."

Bancroft is inclined to blame Carson for Kearny's disaster at San Pasqual. The reason for this accusation was a mystery to me till I happened to run across a letter in the Bancroft archives written by John M. Swan in 1875 (Calif. MS. E. 65). Swan says that Carson "according to report told the officers under Gen. Kearney that the native Californians would not fight but that all the Americans had to do was to yell, make a rush, and the Californians would run away. Misled probably by these reports Gen. Kearney left 200 of his dragoons behind him in New Mexico and continued his route with a bodyguard of 100 dragoons. Neither Colton or Tuthill speaks of Kit Carson's report about the native Californians not being willing to fight, and yet I have no doubt of the truth of it, and it was but too common among foreigners, both Americans and others, to talk in the same way."

All that is necessary to refute the remarks of Swan is an examination of Emory's report under the heading, October 6 and 7:

"Came into camp late and found Carson with an express from California, bearing intelligence that the country had surrendered without a blow, and that the American flag floated in every port. . . . [This] news caused some changes in our camp; one hundred dragoons, officered by . . . and a few hunters of tried experience, formed the party for California. Major Sumner, with the dragoons, was ordered to retrace his steps."

Carson as guide was assigned to the advance guard under command of Aide-de-camp Capt. Abraham R. Johnston who was killed at San Pasqual at daybreak on the 6th of December, 1846. Acting on Carson's advice the wagons were exchanged for pack-saddles. Apaches were met at the Copper Mines and, tho they professed great friendship, Carson said "with a twin-

kle of his keen hazel eye . . . 'I would not trust one of them.'” By November 1 the “army” reached the rough country about the lower canyons of the Verde River where the animals were already found to be in a “shattered condition.” Near here they met Apaches of the tribe of “Piñon Lanos” who refused to come into camp for fear of the howitzers. Carson finally induced a sole red-skin to abandon his fears while Emory and others remained as hostages in the Indian camp. Presents were distributed and a guide secured to traverse the mountain and avoid a sixty-mile dry march Carson had previously made.

November 19 found them at the point of Bighorn Mountain where Carson shot a doe bighorn (probably the animal figured on the plate opposite page 92 of Emory’s Report).

On the 22nd, Dr. Griffin says—“Our men are nearly naked and barefooted, their feet sore and leg-weary. Only the sick have been allowed to ride lately. We are a mile and a half above the mouth of the Gila.”

On the 23rd, letters were intercepted containing the important news of the recapture of Los Angeles and Santa Barbara by Flores. A Mexican messenger, a former friend of Carson’s, advised them not to think of going on to California with so small a force.

On the 25th, they mounted the wild horses captured from a Mexican train and crossed the Colorado at a ford selected by Carson. Bundles of fresh grass were tied on behind each saddle in anticipation of the frightful desert ahead. The evening of the 26th found them at an old well, the first water in the desert, and insufficient to serve the 250 animals and 150 men who had been famishing for the past 24 hours.

November 27, they arrived at what is now Carrizo Station where “alas the waters were bitter!—bitter!” says Captain Johnston. On the 28th at noon they reached the large sulphur springs (Agua Caliente) on Carrizo Creek; “many animals were left on the road to die. . . in spite of the generous efforts of the men to bring them in” (Emory).

On the 29th, making but slow progress and with “scarcely a ration left for the men” they followed up the dry bed of Carrizo Creek sixteen miles to beyond “Vallo Citron,” or “Ba-you Cita” (Vallecito) Springs, where they halted to recuperate, starting out again on December 1 painfully and slowly over the

mountains to the San Felipe Creek, and arriving the next day at the ranch of Jonathan J. Warner at Agua Caliente.

December 5, Capt. Gillespie, Lt. Beale and thirty-five men came up from Stockton at San Diego with dispatches. Came also reports of the force of California cavalry gathering against them and blocking the approaches to San Diego. Kearny was now at Santa Ysabel (Stokes Ranch).

The battle commenced at dawn on the 6th. Warner (*History of Los Angeles County, 1876*) has given the Spanish version and also an interesting journal of Dr. Griffin, Kearny's surgeon. An account told by an Indian eye-witness is included in Elizabeth Roberts' "Indian Stories of the Southwest." Carson himself described the engagement vividly to Senator Benton, who delivered a speech to the Senate based on Carson's narrative. This speech has lately been reprinted in Stephen Bonsal's "Life of Edward F. Beale."

Carson forgets to mention Beale's Indian orderly who, knowing the trails, reached San Diego first. Unfortunately the Indian was omitted from the commemorative tablet placed in the Smithsonian Institution by California citizens as a memorial to the services of Carson and Beale, bearers of the message for relief. Carson's narrative continues—

"Remained in San Diego about a month or so, till the wounded recovered. Then a force of 600 men were organized and started for Los Angeles under Stockton and Kearn(e)y. There were at Los Angeles about 700 Mexicans.

On the 8th January [18]47, we arrived within 15 miles of Los Angeles. The Mexicans had a good position, being in command of a hill where we had to pass the river. We had two pieces of cannon. Stockton directed them. The Mexicans only stood a few rounds of fire, retreated, and we crossed the river, took possession of the hill, and encamped for the night.

On the 9th we approached within three miles of the Pueblo, having to fight during the day. Nothing however was necessary to be employed but the artillery. They could not make their appearance near us but Stockton, from his unerring aim of his guns, would make them leave.

On the 10th we took possession of the Pueblo. The place was evacuated by the Mexicans. They went to attack Fremont.

He was thirty [miles] distant from the Pueblo, on the march thither with about 400 men that he had raised in the vicinity of Monterey. They met him, would not fight him, [and] surrendered to him in preference to any other of the commanders.

On the 12th, I think, Fremont found us at Los Angeles. We remained there during the winter without any further molestation. As soon as Fremont joined I left Kearn(e)y and joined him. In March I started as bearer of dispatches for the War Dept. Lieut. Beale went with me with despatches for the Navy Department.

Beale, during the first 20 days, I had to lift (him) on and off his horse. I did not think he could live, but I took as good care and paid to him as much attention as could [be] given to anyone in the same circumstances, and he had, before our arrival, got so far recovered that he could assist himself. For my care I was trebly paid by the kindness and attention given me by his mother while I was in Washington.

On the River Gila we were attacked by the Indians. During the night they sent a good many arrows into our camp, but without effect. As soon as they commenced I directed the men to hold before them pack saddles, and not speak a word, so that the Indians could not direct their aim by hearing us. For them not to return the fire, but let the Indians approach, and then use our rifles as clubs.

The Indians did not approach but finding they done no execution they left before morning. And then we continued our journey. Had no further difficulty and arrived at Washington in June.

At St. Louis I had the honor of an introduction to Colonel Benton, and was invited by him (that) during my stay in Washington to remain at his house. I accepted of his invitation and, during the time I was there, received the very kindest of treatment.

I remained in Washington some time, received the appointment of Lieutenant of Rifles U. S. Army from President Polk, and was then ordered back to California as bearer of despatches. Lt. Beale [went] with me, but, on account of his illness he was compelled to return from St. Louis

Arrived at Los Angeles in October, then went on to Monterey and delivered the despatches to Colonel Mason, and [the]

Drags., (the officer in command). Remained a few days and was ordered back to Los Angeles."

The skirmish of January 8 occurred at the Paso de Bartolo on the San Gabriel River. The next day's fight has become known as the "Battle of the Mesa." It occurred in the Cañada de Los Alisos, not far from the Los Angeles River. The juncture with Fremont, who arrived from the north, took place on the 14th. This ended the war with the Mexicans but was only the start of disagreement among the American commanders.

Beale's orders from Stockton to carry despatches to the Navy Department were dated Feb. 9, 1847, when he was ordered to join Carson's party. The return trip from Santa Fé westward to the coast was evidently made by the longer and less dangerous Spanish trail north of the Grand Canyon. Returning to Carson's narrative—

"Shortly after my arrival [at Los Angeles], I was assigned to duty with the Dragoons under command of Captain Smith. The greater part of the winter I passed in the Tejon Pass. Had twenty-five men under my command guarding the Pass to prohibit Indians from taking through stolen animals. It being the main pass, they would have to go through in case they committed any depredations.

In the Spring I was again ordered to Washington as bearer of despatches."

This third trip with despatches is the one G. Douglass Brewerton has written of so interestingly (*Harpers Magazine* Aug. 1853, April 1854). The outfit was assembled and drilled at Bridge Creek (Puente), fifteen miles east of Los Angeles, and the start was made May 4. The route was through the Cajon Pass, along the Mohave River and over the Spanish Trail. Some reports say that Carson brought out nuggets and further news of the gold discovery at this time.

California saw nothing more of Carson till 1853. He had settled on a farm at the Rayado, New Mexico, and desirous of doing a little speculating among the California miners, purchased sheep to drive over the long trail he knew so well. He says—

"In February '53, I went to the Rio Abajo and purchased sheep. Returned with them to the Rayado. Then I started for

California. There was with me Henry Mercure, John Bernavette and their employees. We had about 6,500 head of sheep.

Went to Fort Laramie, then kept the wagon road that is travelled by emigrants to California. Arrived about the first of August [Sept. 6], having met with no serious loss. Sold our sheep to Mr. Norris at \$5.50 a head, doing very well.

I heard so much talk of the great change that had taken place at San Francisco, I concluded to go down, and when I arrived I would not have known the place if I had not been there so often before. Maxwell came on shortly after me to California. Disposed of his sheep in Sacramento. But on Carson River he sent to me an express, which I received at Sacramento, requesting me to await his arrival and then we would travel together home by way of the Gila. He arrived. I went down to Los Angeles by land. He took the steamer. I would not travel on the sea, having made a voyage on that in 1846, and I was so disgusted with it that I swore that it would be the last time I would leave sight of land when I could get a mule to perform the journey. [I] arrived safely at Los Angeles, Maxwell having arrived some fifteen days before me. Made the necessary preparations, and then started for New Mexico.

Came to the Pimo village, and on account of the scarcity of grass, we continued up the Gila to the mouth of the San Pedro, up it three days, and from there we took a straight course for the copper mines, and then [we journeyed on] to the Del Norte, thence home through the settlements of the Rio Abajo. Arrived at Taos on Decr. 25th, 1853."

Carson had now achieved a wide reputation and every emigrant had heard his name. The Daily Alta California, a San Francisco paper, of August 9, 1853, has this note in the Sacramento Valley News column:

"A train lately arrived in Sacramento reports passing Kit Carson in Carson Valley on a new road to the Sweetwater which he laid out at that time."

Then on September 5 the San Francisco Herald has the following announcement:

"Kit Carson arrived on the Cosumnes river near Daylor's Ranch on Friday with 1500 head of sheep. The remainder of his herd, 7000, will be in, in a few days."

The Sacramento Union notes his arrival about September 6.

Several relatives of Kit Carson established themselves in California in the early days. At least three of his brothers found their way here. "Mose," Kit's half brother, described by Peters (MS., 1856) as "a man weighing over 200—60 years old—over six feet high with one eye out and minus several fingers—rough and weather beaten from a life on the frontier," came with Young's second party in 1831 and was employed at the time of the Bear Flag revolt as foreman on the Fitch rancho then on the extreme Northwestern Mexican frontier in Sonoma county. He returned to Santa Fé in January 1856. Lindsay, a younger brother, settled in the Russian river country in 1847. Hamilton, slightly older than Kit, was in the Sierras early in the Gold days.

Carson had returned to the Missouri settlement in 1842 to leave his little five year old daughter Adaline, among his relatives. He left her "with one of his sisters, who placed her in Howard's Female College in Fayette, where she was liberally educated," (Switzler—"Kit" Carson,—In Missouri Hist. Soc. Collections, vol. 2, p. 39). Many are the legends regarding her. Some reports say she came to California, died, and was buried at Mono Lake (Sabin, *Kit Carson Days*). Capt. William Drannan, not a reliable informant, told an inquirer that when twenty years old she married a doctor named Jim Calvin, removed to California, and died at her ranch in the Feather River Canyon, near Springville, at the age of 34 (*Adventure Magazine*, March 10, 1922). Adaline was the only child of Kit's first wife, an Arapaho squaw who died soon after the girl was born. Carson later married a New Mexican woman, Maria Josefa Jaramillo. They had eight children.

During the last fifteen years of his life Kit Carson lived almost constantly at Taos with his family. He engaged in campaigns against the Navajo and Ute Indians and against the Kiowas and Comanches at Adobe Walls. After these tribes were subdued Carson in his capacity as Indian Agent became their friend and adviser, understanding their needs and speaking their languages.

He accomplished a number of reforms in the Indian policy of the government, and one of the last acts of his life, performed at the cost of considerable physical pain, was a journey to the East in behalf of the Ute nation.

At this time (1868) he was a very sick man having been trampled by his horse several years previously. As a result of this accident he died at the old army post of Fort Lyon, Colorado, on May 23, 1868. He was taken to Taos and buried there.

Kit Carson was a man of great energy and decision of character, alert, poised, calm in danger, and among the keenest, shrewdest and bravest of experienced frontiersmen. In knowledge of his craft he ranked with such leaders as Bridger, St. Vrain, the Bent "boys," Antoine Leroux, and others among his associates. Yet his appearance was unheroic enough—short and stocky, grey-eyed, blond-haired, and bow-legged. He had however those qualities of modesty, sobriety and strict veracity not proverbially common among the trappers of his day. His kindliness and generosity caused at least three "old-timers,"—Oliver Wiggins, "Billy" Ryus, and "Cap't" Drannan, to regard him as their foster-father. Those who knew him well,—General Sherman, General Rusling, General Beale, General Fremont, Mrs. Fremont, Col. Peters and a host of other friends,—respected, honored and loved him. His name will "carry on" as long as our highways and railways follow his trails and our cities cover the ground where he broke the brush for his campfires.

Charles L. Camp.

